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THE COSMOGONIC GODS OF THE IROQUOIS. By J. N. B. HEWITT, Bureau
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WITH the exception of that of the learned Lafitau in the early part of the eighteenth century and that of Dr. Daniel G. Brinton in the middle of our century, no serious attempts have been made to define and interpret the subjective creations—the cosmogonic gods—of Iroquoian philosophy.

The former attempted little more than a characterization of the chief cosmogonic gods of this cult, while the latter endeavored to show what phenomena in nature these gods impersonated, but his essay is vitiated by an unsuccessful attempt to make the facts in the case support an erroneous preconceived theory.

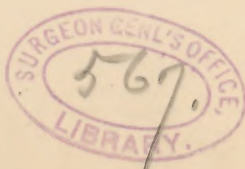
In the protology of this people, we see in full operation the effect of the imputative method of explaining the phenomena of nature, in the endowment with subjective attributes of the bodies and powers in nature. Herein lies the key to the entire cosmology of the Iroquoian people.

If the evidence of language may be trusted, it seems safe to regard these gods as creations indigenous to the primitive philosophy of the Iroquois regarding the origin of themselves and their environment—the protology of their existence and that of the earth and the heavens.

The character and functions of the various bodies and forces in nature determined the rank they hold in this cosmology.

A brief outline of the cosmology of the Iroquois may aid in understanding the analyses of the names of the cosmogonic gods of this cult.

The Iroquoian account, as told by the Onondaga shamans, relates that before the formation of this earth there existed in the sky a world similar in every respect to this and inhabited by people endowed with faculties similar to their own. That sky-world had no need of the light of the sun or of the moon. Fast by the lodge of the chief of the sky-people stood a huge celandine-tree and its golden yellow blossoms lighted the firmament of the sky-world. The sun and the moon are peculiar to this world. The chief of the sky people is called by the Iroquois in general *Tha-ro'-hya-wa'-ko* and by the Onondagas by this and in particular by the name *Ha-on'-hwēn'-teya-wa'-ko*. In the course of time *Tha-ro'-hya-wa'-ko* received an offer of marriage from the daughter of the first of the sky-people to



taste death. Both the father and mother of this girl were born with cauls and so both were "hidden" until the age of puberty.

Tha-roⁿ-hya-wā'-koⁿ after subjecting her to a severe probation accepted the girl in marriage, and to solemnize the espousals he caused corn to fall like rain into the houses of her patrilial people so abundantly as to fill them. Then after a visit to her people his wife returned to him, but noticing that she was "cinctured" (*éncienté*), *Tha-roⁿ-hya-wā'-koⁿ* became so enraged by jealousy that he became ill and lay unconscious for days, until he ordered the pulling up of the light-giving celandine-tree by the roots, and cast his new spouse into the hole through the sky made by the uprooting of the tree. This cured the sky-god of his jealousy. This woman whom the Hurons called *Eatahēⁿ 'tsik* [Aataentsik] fell into our firmament; whereupon the water fowl and amphibious animals constructed the present earth for her abode. Five days after her fall she gave birth to a daughter, who in five days attained full growth. The daughter, whose name seems to have been entirely forgotten at an early period, espoused a turtle in the assumed form and lineaments of a handsome young man. When he came to lodge with her, he placed over her bed two arrows, one having no head and the other headed with flint. Before day he left his spouse's side. From this union the daughter of *E-yā'-ta-hēⁿ-tsik* was brought to bed with twins. Just before they were born the young mother heard the one say to his mate, "It is now time to be born; I will go the natural way," to which the other replied, "I will go out this way; it is thin here, for it is transparent," at the same time tapping his mother on the armpit. The first was born in the natural way, while the other burst through the armpit of his mother causing her death. The grandmother of the twins, *E-yā'-ta-hēⁿ-tsik*, asked "who killed your mother?" Whereupon *Tawiskarā'*, the real culprit, exclaimed, "He did it," pointing to his brother, called *Otēⁿ-toⁿ-nī'-ā'*, whom the grandmother seizing threw over the lodge into a clump of shrubbery; but being supernatural he did not die, to the great chagrin of the grandmother. Then, *E-yā'-ta-hēⁿ-tsik* cut off the head of her dead daughter and affixed it to the top of a tall tree where it became the sun, and in like manner affixed the body which became the moon, and it is said even now that we may discern the outlines of the folded legs and arms on the face of the moon. At a later period these two luminaries were placed in the sky. Up to this time it will be seen the earth had been lighted by cosmic light alone, which in Tuskarōra is called *u-kyē-hēⁿ-stē*.

E-yā'-ta-hēⁿ-tsik made *Ta-wīs'-ka-rā'* her especial darling, and in all after time she and he worked together doing those things that gave trouble and pain to man. On the other hand the sole aim and desire of *O-tēⁿ-toⁿ-nī'-ā'* found expression in his constantly doing everything to promote the welfare and comfort of man immediately and prospectively.

This is but the baldest outline of the main features of the cosmology of the Iroquoian people as related by the Onondaga shamans of to-day. The other extant versions differ from it only in details.

With this preliminary sketch of the cosmogony of the Iroquois,

attention may now be given to an attempt to analyze the names and to interpret and identify the phenomena in nature represented by these subjective creations of barbaric philosophy.

Tha-roⁿ-hya-wa'^l-koⁿ or *Ha-oñ-hwěñ-tya-wa'^l-koⁿ*.

Tha-roⁿ-hya-wa'^l-koⁿ was the ruler of the sky, which modern research has shown to be an optical illusion only. Being one of the apparently largest bodies in nature and one that is ever present whether by night or day from all time, and one that is unaffected by the lapse of generations and the rough turmoil of storm and tempest, it naturally came to be regarded as the oldest of powers—the Ancient of Days. The serene, immobile passivity of the sky, its preponderating greatness and grandeur, thus moved the Iroquoian thinkers to clothe its embodiment with supreme power and strength, representing him as existent “without father, without mother, without descent (*i. e.*, pedigree), having neither beginning of days, nor end of life,” as ever benign and beneficent, at all times solicitous to promote the welfare of man, and in great emergencies even descending among men personally to aid them against adverse powers and beings of sinister aspect and malevolent purpose. From the brief introductory account of the protology of the Iroquois, it would seem to be erroneous to identify *Tha-roⁿ-hya-wa'^l-koⁿ* with *Yoskehā'* of the Huronian version or with *Otēñ-toñ-ni'-a'* of that of the Onondagas and other tribes, for the latter is the demiurge, being, strictly speaking, the grandson of the spouse of *Tha-roⁿ-hya-wa'^l-koⁿ*, *E-ya'-ta-hěⁿ-tsik*.

Since the sky appears to be sustained by something, to be, in other words, held up, it was argued that its master held it up; hence, the name of this master, *Tha-roⁿ-hya-wa'^l-koⁿ* which signifies “He holds fast the sky.” The elements of this name are the following,—the initial *t*, the ancient and now obsolescent sign of duality, formerly used to denote the action of *two* things that were double by nature, as the eyes, hands, feet etc., but in modern Iroquoian speech it has become expletive rather than aught else, since it is in many cases impossible to give it any significative value in the expression with which it is connected; *ha* is the singular masculine, third person of the pronoun of the anthropic gender, meaning “he;” *-roⁿ-hya* is the noun *o-roⁿ-hya'* without its unmodified gender-sign, meaning “the sky, the visible heavens,” and in some dialects “blue,” also, it being a derivative from the verb *-u-rūk*, “to cover, spread over;” and, lastly, *wa'-koⁿ* is the perfect tense of the obsolete verb *wa' k*, “to seize, enclose, embrace, hold fast,” as with the hands, claws, etc.; although a past tense it has a present meaning.

The Onondagas and, perhaps, other tribes of this family apply to this god another descriptive name, *Ha-o hwěñ-tya-wa'-koⁿ* which means, “He holds fast the earth.” This name differs from the former in only two respects, namely, the lack of the initial *t*, and the substitution of the noun *o-hwěñ-tya'*, “earth, the world,” instead of *o-roⁿ-hya'* of the former expression. The lack of the initial *t* in this name shows the correctness of the remark made above that it is obsolescent, for the verb used in both

instances is one and the same and so is the subject. The latter name embodies the belief that the sky holds up the earth for which purpose it touches the earth along the horizon. Thus, the attitude or situation of the sky fully and clearly explain both names, indicating how the Iroquoian people sought to name the prime mover of the sky. In a Tuskarora legend, the sky-god is represented as arrayed in a mantle of blue-colored dog-skins. This is probably one of the considerations why the Onondagas and other tribes of this family sacrifice a dog to this god at a solemn feast in the month of (?) February.

E-ya'-ta-hěⁿ-tsik.

As the whilom spouse of the sky-god, it seems fitting to take up for discussion next the goddess whom the Hurons called *Aataentsic*, but which the present writer spells *E-ya'-ta-hěⁿ-tsik*, as it seems to represent better the sounds sought to be recorded by the first orthography in this paragraph. This goddess while dwelling in the sky-world became the spouse of the god of the heavens, *Tha-roⁿ-hya-wa'-koⁿ*, but for some indiscretion which aroused the implacable jealousy of her spouse, she was cast down into our atmosphere; for her lord in his frenzy of jealousy ordered his friends to uproot the light-giving celandine tree, which being done made a hole so long and deep that it extended into our firmament; and it is claimed that the sun now shines through the aforesaid opening.

E-ya'-ta-hěⁿ-tsik is represented as malevolent towards mankind, spoiling or destroying as far as lay in her power whatever of good *Yoskehá'* had done for the welfare of the race, as presiding at the death-scenes of men, she herself sucking out their life-blood, causing them to die by disease and exhaustion, and as feeding upon serpents, vipers and other reptiles.

As the queen of the manes she received as tribute all that which was placed in the grave, compelling the unbodied spirits to dance for her health and amusement.

There is some difficulty encountered in attempting an analysis of the name *Eyā'tahěⁿtsik* [*Aatahensic*, etc., are other forms, but the one in the text I adopt as representing what I regard as the best]. Laftau says, "c' est un nom composé d' *Ata*, qui désigne la personne, et de *entsi*, qui, dans la composition, signifie un excès de longueur, ou d'éloignement de temps et de lieu, ou qui est un superlatif en matière de bien ou de mal" [244 p., t. i.]. The first objection against this derivation is that *ata* in none of the dialects designates person; *entsi* is not a form of the adjective *es*, "long [to be]," and withal no account is taken of the final *c*- or *k*-sound; and, second, this is not a form of the intensive enclitic *tcī*, "very, fully," as might be supposed. These are all fatal to the accuracy of the derivation. Another etymology of the expression has been proposed by Dr. Brinton, but had the learned Doctor known the fixed rules governing word-position in Iroquoian composition he would never have given it a second thought. He attempted in this analysis the fulfilment of a preconceived notion of connecting this name with another Iroquoian descriptive term, *Aouen*, meaning "water," compounding it with the verb-stem *at*, "to be in, to be

contained." There are two fatal objections to this derivation. In the first place, *Aouen*, *A'wēn'* for **wa'-žn'*, being a sentence, cannot enter into composition with individual or other words, and second, the morphothesis or word-order of the verb is that it invariably follows the noun with which it is combined, while Dr. Brinton unwittingly makes it precede the element with which he attempts to combine it.

Brebeuf affirms that, to the Hurons, *Yoskehā'* denoted the sun and *Aataentsic*, the moon, asserting that she could assume whatsoever form and figure suited her. But here there was a confusion of characters. It was the daughter of *E-ya'tahēn'tsik* who became the moon which changes its form continually. It is a very common thing among writers to confound *E-ya'-ta-hēn'tsik* with her daughter, and hence arises the erroneous identification of *E ya'-ta-hēn'tsik* with the moon. The very fact that there is a uniformity in designating her as the grandmother of *Yoskehā'* may be taken as evidence that it is an error to make her his mother in direct contradiction of the clear and uniform declaration of the cosmologic legends.

On both linguistic and functional grounds, I am inclined to regard *E-ya'-ta-hēn'tsik* as the impersonation or goddess of night and the earth. The analysis which I offer is strictly within the fixed rules of Iroquoian sentence formation and is not opposed to any phonetic objection. The orthography *Eataentsic* was used by Brebeuf, in 1635, but in the following year he adopted the spelling *Aataentsic*, and only once does he use the spelling *Ataentsic* which is the form of the expression usually found in the literature pertaining to the subject. But after due consideration, I believe that the spellings *Eataentsic* and *Aataentsic* are the nearest approximations to the expression as actually uttered now more than 250 years ago; the fact that both these orthographies have two vowel sounds at the initial part of the expression makes for the derivation which I am about to suggest. But, the fact that this name is not found at present except in the literature of the early Huron period must not be accepted as ground to conclude that the legend was the product of a distinctive Huronian cosmology, for the other terms in it, or, at least, some of their elements, are found in all the dispersed branches of this family of tongues. Hence, we may infer that this cosmology belongs to the protoethnic period of the entire group of tongues, for even among the Tceroki the name *tawiskara'* is found designating "flint."

Adopting the first orthography of Brebeuf as representing approximately the true sound of the word-sentence, I will spell it as follows, *E-ya'-ta-hēn'tsik* or *E-ā'-ta-hēn'tsik* which is substantially that of Brebeuf, and which I resolve as follows,—*E* is the indefinite, or specifically, feminine, anthropic pronoun of the singular, third person, meaning "her," and *-ya'-ta*, the noun *oyā' 'ta'* without the prefixive gender-sign *o-*, meaning "body, the body of a living being," *-hēn-tsi*, the adjective, "black, swarthy, swart," and the enclitic *-k*, which is a contract form of the substantive verb *i'kēñ* "(it) is;" the entire synthesis meaning literally "her body is black," or, freely, "she whose body is black." In this analysis, I repeat, no phonetic law or grammatic rule of the language has been violated.

Thus, I believe, we find ample linguistic evidence showing that *E-ya'-ta-hěv'-tsik* is not the moon-goddess but rather the goddess of "black night."

Moreover, one of the most dramatic episodes related in this cosmology is the theft of the sun by *E-ya'-ta-hěv'-tsik* aided by *Ohä 'ä* or *Ta-wis-karä'* who carried it to the eastward into an island in a vast sea of water, for the purpose of depriving the earth and man of light. But *Otēntoñnī'-ä'*, in his capacity of demiurge, saying, "it is not good that men should dwell in darkness," and calling his trusted friends, Beaver, Fisher, Fox, Raven and Otter, brought, after great difficulty, the sun back to supply uninterrupted light to man,—that is, so that there would not be darkness and night but continuous day. But, by a blunder of Otter a compromise had to be made with *E-ya'-ta-hěv'-tsik*, who stoutly insisted on the sun being returned absolutely to her, it being agreed that day and night should divide equally between them the empire of time. In this circumstance, there is allusion made to the seeming theft of the sun by Night every day when the sun sets.

Lastly, the usual application of the appellation, grandmother, to the moon must not be construed as evidence that the grandmother of *Otēntoñnī'-ä'* is meant, for the mother of *Otēntoñnī'-ä'* being born on the earth was, in fact regarded as the grandmother of the race in a stricter sense than her mother, *E-ya'-tä-hěv'-tsik*.

Yoskehä'—Tawiskara'.

Following the many erroneous hints given by the Jesuit priests in the *Relations des Jésuites*, Dr. Brinton does not hesitate to identify *Yoskehä'* with the sun even giving a fanciful analysis of the name in support of his theoretic identification. But, I believe that a careful study of the character of *Yoskehä'* will make it clear that *Yoskehä'* was not primitively the impersonation of the sun, but there may have been among the laity those who thus confounded him not only with the Sungod, but also with *Tha-rov-hya-wä'-ko'*, the sky-god, and so there is no great ground to wonder at the confusion of characters.

In the protology of the Iroquois *Yoskehä'* or *Otēntoñnī'-ä'* is the demiurge in contrast with *Tawiskara'* his brother, who represented the destructive or Typhonic power in nature as exemplified by the destructiveness of frost, hail and ice, often holding for months in its stiffening, solidifying, deadening embrace, the rivers, lakes, and ponds, the sap of the trees, plants and vegetation of the land. The people hold in high esteem the great and bounteous benefits they believed they enjoyed only through the care and benevolence of *Yoskehä'*. Success in hunting was assured by his aid, for they believed that the game animals were not always free, but were enclosed in a cavern where they had been concealed by *Tawiskara'*. But, that they might increase and fill the forests, *Yoskehä'* gave them freedom but in a manner such as to enable him to control them at will for the welfare of man. To this desirable end, it is said, he wounded them all in the foot, with an arrow, the wolf alone escaping the stroke, whence it is so hard to take him in the chase. When, in the beginning of the earth's

existence, it became dry and sterile by reason of the absorption of all the waters under the armpit of a great frog and none could be obtained without its permission, it was *Yoskehá'* who resolved to free himself and all his posterity from this bondage. To do this he made an incision in the side of the frog, whence the waters issued in such abundance that they spread over the whole earth, thus forming rivers, lakes, seas and all the cooling water fountains. Having learned the invention of fire from the tortoise he taught men the art of fire-making, so that they could have, when needful, new fire. The corn they eat was given them by *Yoskehá'*; it is he who causes it to sprout, grow and come to maturity; if in spring-time their fields of corn, beans and squashes are green; if they gather ripe and plenteous harvests, and if their lodges are filled with well matured ears of corn, their gratitude is given to *Yoskehá'* alone. In 1636, it was predicted in the Huron country that a great famine menaced the land, simply because *Yoskehá'* had been seen lean and emaciated like a skeleton, holding in his hand a blighted ear of corn and gnawing with his naked teeth the leg of a man, for these prodigies were the unmistakable omens of a very poor harvest. *Yoskehá'* labors, plants corn, drinks, eats and sleeps, and is lascivious like man. His lodge is made like their own, being well supplied with whatsoever sustains life. He is of a benevolent nature, giving increase to all, doing only that which is good, and vouchsafing fine weather. When he becomes aged, he can in an instant rejuvenate himself, making himself a young man of about twenty-five years, and so he never dies, although somewhat subject to bodily infirmities.

With this brief outline of his character, let us see what meaning may be obtained from an analysis of his names, *Yoskehá'*, *O tēñ-toñ-nī'-á'*, or *Otēñtoñnīhá'*.

The latter is the name applied to him by the Onondagas and it signifies, according to the best native authority I could obtain, "the dear, young, or precious, little shoot or sprout." The final *á* or *há* is the adjective denoting "small," but here it is used as a caritive. Speaking a language cognate with that of the Huron, it is probable that the Onondaga name is a mere translation of the Huron name. An analysis of the latter confirms this view. In Mohawk and in Huron *O-ska'* signifies "a sprout or shoot," the initial *yo* or *io* is the neuter singular third person of the pronoun, meaning "it," and the final *-há* is the adjective "small" having here also a caritive force explained above, the whole then signifying, "it is the dear little shoot or sprout." If these analyses be correct, and there seems to be no valid phonetic or grammatic objection, it is seen that *Yoskehá'* and *Otēñtoñnīhá'* are figurative expressions denotive of the growth-producing, revivifying force in nature, to whom of course is opposed the god of frost, ice and snow, ever blighting, as he does, young plants, the growing and budding darlings of *Yoskehá'*. It is, I believe, the reproductive, rejuvenating power in nature that is personified in *Yoskehá'*, and not the sun which is ever portrayed as retaining the full vigor of manhood, undiminished by the lapse of years.

Ta-wis'-ka-rä', Ta-wis'-ka-no', Tawiskaron (Brebeuf)
Sa-ie-wis'-ke-rat, or O-ha'-a.

This god, the twin-brother of *Yoskehä'*, is usually represented as the adversary of his brother and his unsuccessful imitator. The narration of the formation of man by *Yoskehä'*, detailing the abortive attempt of *Tawis'karä'* to do likewise, fashioning only monkeys, bats, owls and other uncanny things, such as the reptilia and the worms that live in the ground and those that mysteriously become moths and butterflies only to assume again the vermiform condition, is merely adversative to this assumed power of *Ta-wis'-ka-rä'* to do the things properly belonging to the character of *Yoskehä'*.

When, through the fostering care of *Yoskehä'*, the forests had become filled with various species of animals *Tawis'karä'* hid them in a vast cavern in the mountain side. But, noticing that the forests had become entirely free from game and animals, *Yoskehä'* sought them out and finding them opened the cavern, out of which they came forth. After the departure of *Yoskehä'*, *Tä-wis'-ka-rä'*, noticing the reappearance of the animals, hastened to the cavern and again closed it before all the animals had come forth. These that were again imprisoned in the cavern became transformed into the uncanny things that creep and crawl and live hidden in the ground and elsewhere, being regarded as possessing supernatural faculties. With the aid of his grandmother he spoiled in various ways the corn and bean crops of the Iroquois. These are some of the deeds of the despoiling and blighting *Tawis'karä'*.

With these preliminary remarks as to the character of *Tawis'karä'*, as narrated by the modern Iroquoian shamans as well as by the early Jesuit missionaries among the Hurons, attention will now be given to an attempt to analyze the names applied to this god.

The first to be considered is *Tawis'karä'* [*Thä-wis'-ka-rä'* and its cognate *Tawiskano'*, a contracted form of *Tawiskara'no'*] and *Saiewis'kerat*. The derivation of this name by Dr. Brinton from the word-sentence *tyo'karas* "it becomes dark," does not bear examination, having not a single element of probability, being purely fanciful. This, so far as I am aware, is the only attempt to analyze the expression.

From an examination of the terms which are apparently cognates, it is clear that the element common to them all is *-wis-kara-*. Now this is the noun *O-wis'-kä-rä'*, "hail, sleet." But this is merely a derivative cognate with *O-wis'-ä'*, "ice" and "glass-goblet." *U-wic'-rě*, "snow" and "frost," the latter in Tuskarora. The final *-a-no'*, to the form *Ta-wis-ka-no'* for *Ta-wis-ka-ra'-no'*, is the adjective common to the entire group meaning "cold," the combination meaning freely the "cold" *Tawis'-ka-rä'*. The initial *t* here has to be explained in a manner very different from that followed in explaining the initial *t* of the name *Tha-roⁿ hyä-wä'-koⁿ*; while the *a* is for *hä*, "he," the singular anthropic pronoun of

the third person. In some of the dialects an *s*, in others *ç* (like *th* in *thin*) which in rapid pronunciation is sometimes sounded like the interdental *t*-sound peculiar to many Indian tongues, is a prefix to proper nouns. The whole meaning "He is hail, is the hail," or, freely, "He who is the hail or ice." In *Sa-ye-wis'-ke-rat* wherein the pronoun is changed to the indefinite third personal singular of the anthropic gender, there is confirmatory evidence in support of the identification already indicated. The initial *sa* is the iterative affix, equivalent to the *re-* in *re-gain*, which it has already been said becomes expletive when the word-sentence becomes the name of an individual; the *ye* is the indefinite personal pronoun noted above, *-wis-kër* for *-wis-kar-* is the stem of the noun *O-wis'-ka-rä*, "hail, sleet," *at* is the obsolescent verb "to present, show, spread forth;" the word-sentence would therefore mean, freely, "he who spreads forth sleet, hail, etc."

If this analysis is a retracing of an historical product of linguistic activity, and I believe it is, then we see that *Tavis'-kara'* was so called because he spread forth hail, sleet and ice and the blighting frosts, because he was the cold ice-king, the enemy and despoiler of the planted crops of man, the failure or destruction of which being the extinction of the hope of future provision and the dreadful harbinger of famine and pressing want.

In some of the dialects of this family *Tavis'kara'* is also a name for the flintstone. This is to be explained perhaps, from the resemblance of this species of rock to ice; its fracture has very much the appearance of that of ice; its bluish or rather dark green color and seeming transparency assimilating it in other respects to that of ice.

In whatever *Tawiskara'* did, he was instigated and abetted by his grandmother *E-ya'-ta-hëv'-tsik*, the goddess of night and the earth. The effects of frost and cold are best seen in the morning when the god of ice and cold has accomplished his nefarious work under cover of darkness.

In connection with what has already been said in explanation of the name and character of *Tavis'kara'*, it is necessary to note that the Onondagas apply the name *Ohä'ä* to him, and that this name is also a name for flint and that in a cognate rhotacist dialect it is, under slightly variant forms, a name for both *frost* and *flint*; I mean in Tuskarora, in which the word is *u-qnä'-rë*, meaning, "flint, a chip or fragment of shell or stone or pottery," showing that the Onondagas must have known the mythic connection between the flintstone and the frost-king. A cognate of *u-qnä'-rë* is *awëv'-ha rë* for **wa-ha'-rë*, signifying "hoarfrost, frost."

From the *Radices*, etc., of Bruyas, I select the following in support of the analysis offered above: *O-wise*, *gawisa*, "ice, hail, glass;" *owisk-ra*, Iroquois "hail, sleet;" *ga-wis-ke-rontion*, *ga-wis-ontion*, "it is hailing;" *watiowisk-wentare*, "it is covered with frost, with hoarfrost."

Hï'-noⁿ — *Ra-wëñ-ni'-yo'* — *Ha-wëñ-ni'-yo'*.

Hï'-noⁿ in the majority of the tribes of this family is the proethnic name of the god of thunder who, to promote the welfare of man, was ever en-

gaged in clearing the rivers, lakes and streams of the dreaded monsters, serpents and dragons and other nondescript goblins with which they were supposed to be infested. The Iroquois applied to him the esteemed title of grandfather. When they heard the first distant roll of thunder they cast sacrificial tobacco into the fire as an offering to him. The sound of thunder, it is said, is caused by his voice and the lightning is caused by merely knitting his august brows, for even such is the present meaning of the Tuskarora word for lightning, *nä-wa't-ka-hrëq'-nä-riks*, which is composed of the initial *nä*-, the dual demonstrative meaning "two," but now merely expletive here, *wa*-, "it," the animate neuter singular third person of the personal pronouns, *a' t*, the reflexive affix, having here a possessive function, meaning "his," *-kä-hrëq-n-* for *-kä-hrë-n-*, being the noun *o-kä-hrë'-ně*, meaning "eyebrow," *-rik*, signifying "to bite, seize, close," *-s*, the sign of habitual or customary action.

Along side of this name there exists the name *ra-wěñ-ni'-yo'* and in the non-rhotacist dialects *ha-wěñ-ni'-yo'*. This appellation is descriptive, referring to the *great voice* of the thunder-god. It is composed of *ra*- or *ha*-, the masculine singular third person of the anthropic gender, having here a possessive value, "his," *-weñn-* for *-wěñ-nä* from *o-wěñ'-nä'*, signifying "word, voice," and *-i-yo'*, which in modern Iroquois excepting Tuskarora means "fine, beautiful," but in Tuskarora it means "large, great," and there is abundant evidence in the other dialects that that is its original signification; hence, the whole synthesis signifies "his voice is great," and, freely, as an appellative, "he whose voice is great." This is clearly an expression wholly appropriate to none but the god of thunder; so that those writers who are satisfied with deriving this name from the French *le Dieu* and *le bon Dieu* are in error.

Owing to his great activity in watering the earth and in destroying the reptilian and draconic enemies of the human race he soon assimilated to himself a large share of the religious cult historically belonging to *Tharōn-hya-wa'-ko* and *Yoskehā'*, just as Bel, the demiurge in Chaldean cosmology, displaced old El, the Ancient of Days; so that *Hē'-no* acquired a preëminence that made him one of the most noted gods of the Iroquoian theogony.

GRAMMATIC FORM AND THE VERB CONCEPT IN IROQUOIAN SPEECH. By J. N. B. HEWITT, Bureau of Ethnology, Washington, D. C.

[ABSTRACT.]

FORM as an element of grammatic and syntactic relation has been denied to the great majority of aboriginal American languages by William von Humboldt and his school of ultra-metaphysical tendencies. This school likewise denies to these languages the use of a true verb, yea, even concept of such a phenomenon. Humboldt, however, studied these languages at second hand through most untrustworthy sources, having personally not the slightest skill to use any one of these languages he discussed. One of the unavoidable errors resulting from this inability, which

may serve as a fair example of his fallibility, is his unqualified adoption of Duponceau's erroneous statement regarding the characteristic methods of forming words and word-sentences in the aboriginal American languages, that such formation is accomplished in them by "putting together portions of different words, so as to awaken at the same time in the mind of the hearer the various ideas which they separately express."

Professor Hajjim Steinthal is the one man of our day who expounds and defends the fundamental doctrines of Humboldt which he has made his own. He has sought with more or less success to fathom the mysteries and to point out, either to puncture or to correct, the inconsistencies of his profound and wholly theoretical master. Neither arbitrary judgment nor misplaced acumen has been wanting in the process.

Professor Steinthal, following the lead of his great master, classes, with out the necessary preliminary study of those so classed, the great majority of the aboriginal American languages as "formless," because his master and prophet had spoken and said that true grammatic forms are developed in the "complete" inflectional languages only, namely, in the Indo-European and the Semitic, and that agglutinative and incorporative languages have not the genius to devise the morphologic means for the "expression of a true conception of one such form." Professor Steinthal, speaking in general of the aboriginal American languages and in particular of the Nahuatl, says that this language has in "its method of word-making, formed nouns, but *no true verbs*," for what at first sight might be called its verb is "merely a noun with a predicative prefix." Realizing that these views are mere possibilities (they have no right to figure as anything more), Professor Steinthal manages to concede a high degree of cunning and deception to these languages when he artfully says: "On the one hand these languages manage to make up for the lack of real form, by formations so artful that they quite acquire the appearance of real grammatical forms. The concealing disguise must be torn from these formations, in part by etymologic analysis, and more especially by an analysis of the structure of the sentence in general."

This sentence has the appearance of conveying profound wisdom; but, if I rightly construe its meaning, it has no intrinsic soundness, for its fatal weakness lies in the fact that it rests wholly on the unwarranted assumption that the people of a community remember the etymology of the words they employ in their daily conversation. The historical study of the development of language is opposed to such an assumption, disbarring as it does all lexic evolution. It was wrought to support certain conclusions deduced from misinterpreted facts; those conclusions must stand or fall without it.

J. Hammond Trumbull, the noted student of these languages, has, in a masterly article on the "Algonkin Verb," shown that the Algonquian tongue possesses not only a true verb but also true grammatic forms, thus impugning the soundness of the fundamental tenets of the Humboldt-Steinthal school as applied to this language. A similar study of the Iroquoian language as represented in its several dialects leads to conclu-

sions likewise adverse to the validity of the views of the Humboldt following in regard to the lexic and structural processes prevailing in this and other American tongues. There are true grammatic forms in these dialects and they possess true verbs; the grounds upon which these have been denied are not sound, being due to misinterpretation of certain facts of grammar. By far the greater part of the nouns and adjectives in this language are derived from verbs, but the converse process is extremely rare, if such there be, for a single instance only is known to the present writer.